metro

PHILADELPHIA NO. 1 FREE DAILY IN THE

Monday, November 30, 2015 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly

HOW TO DO CYBER MONDAY RIGHT

Expert tips on finding the best deals and avoiding the scams. 24

The stars of "Victor Frankenstein" geek out. 20

Temple football hungry for more. 30-31

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FINDING SUCCESS

Philly leaders are abuzz about a new program that could help funnel more funding to social programs. 4-5

APRIL SAUL

CHRISTIE ENDORSEMENT

1 Chris Christie has won the endorsement of the New Hampshire Union Leader, a major conservative publication in an important early voting state. Union Leader publisher Joseph McQuaid said on Sunday he believed Christie was the candidate who could "take the fight to" Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton as well as confront the threat posed by Islamic State. REUTERS

PILOT'S BODY RECOVERED

2 Turkey recovered the body of a Russian pilot from northern Syria and presented it to Russian diplomats on Sunday, five days after shooting down his warplane in an incident that wrecked relations between two of the main powers involved in Syria's war. A coffin carrying Oleg Peshkov arrived by ambulance on the tarmac of Hatay Airport in southern Turkey near the Syrian border, a Reuters photographer said.

REUTERS

CROOK DIES IN CHIMNEY

3 A suspected burglar who attempted to enter a California home through the chimney died after the homeowner lit a fire without realizing anyone was inside, police said. The man appeared to have climbed into the chimney during the night while the owner was away and then became stuck, according to Fresno County Sheriff's Office. REUTERS

ICE CARVING

7 Ice carver Roger Wing puts the finishing touches on a sculpture for the Christmas at the Historic Houses of Fairmount Park 2015 Kickoff in Rittenhouse Square, 18th and Walnut streets in Philadelphia.

MAIN PHOTO BY RANDI FAIR, ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

ZOO NAMES PANDAS

4 The brother and sister red panda cubs introduced to the public two weeks ago have been named after a public voting contest. The winning names were Betsy (Ross) and Ben (Franklin) which got 17,000 votes.

REUTERS

COLUMNIST AWARD NOD

5 Philly journalist, Metro columnist and PhillyCAM host Ernest Owens has been nominated for the Pen & Pencil Club's Best Multimedia Journalist of the Year award. To vote, visit Penandpencil.org.

METRO

OKAFOR SPEEDING

6 It was first revealed Sunday that Jahlil Okafor, the 19-year-old rookie for the 76ers, was pulled over for driving 108 mph three weeks ago over the Ben Franklin Bridge. "I own my choices both personally and now publicly. At this point I am cooperating and respecting the process I have to go through," Okafor tweeted. METRO

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Help Metro make magic

Please donate to the Metro Magic annual holiday toy drive during the 2015 holiday season.

In keeping with the holiday spirit of giving, Metro is once again launching Tony's Metro Magic, our annual toy drive for underprivileged children in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

This year marks the seventh anniversary of the toy drive, which was renamed in memory of the man who oversaw the project for more than four years, Tony Metcalf, Metro's longest-running editor-in-chief. Mr. Metcalf passed away in 2013 from colon cancer at the age of 50.

Mr. Metcalf lit up every year as he saw the faces of children unwrap their holiday gifts. It is our goal to keep that magic alive. We are now asking readers to contribute what they can to Tony's Metro Magic.

Metro has created a wish list at the Target website that readers can access by going to www.metro.us and clicking on the Tony's Metro Magic logo.

From there, just choose the toys you wish to donate, pay online using Target's secure payment system, and your gifts, along with your name attached, will be delivered to Metro's offices in each city. This season, we hope you will remember the children who will spend the holidays in shelters or who may not have gifts to open. Even one small gift can make a big difference in a child's holiday season.

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Above left is a Camden man who was linked up with housing through a new

New program could fund public good

Leaders are abuzz about using the "Pay for Success" model to fund social programs.

CASSIE OWENS
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

In Philly, there's no lack of proposals to benefit the public. But the issue is always finding the funding to make them a reality.

One new program for funding social programs, known as "Pay for Success," was discussed at a recent conference organized by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia.

"What really animates me about Pay For Success is it creates a tool to invest in human capital," said Ian Galloway, a Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco researcher who spoke at the conference last month.

Also called social impact bonds, the Pay for Success (PFS) method was first developed in the U.K. five years ago, and landed stateside in 2012. While just eight programs have been implemented domestically so far, it's attracting attention for its model — a private-public partnership that pulls private-sector investment into social services.

The twist is that the terms hinge on performance results: Investors see returns based on benchmarks achieved, like say, a certain reduction in special education enrollment in elementary schools.

If the enrollment goes down, the philanthropic investors providing funding achieve their goal, and the city pays them back for their loan. If the program fails, the city won't have to pay back the loan, and investors have spared the city from investing in a failed program.

One key benefit is that under PFS, cities don't have to put up the initial cash to get new, possibly experimental programs off the ground.

Mayor Michael Nutter was in attendance as well, saying he hopes Philadelphia could become the "capital for Pay for Success."

While Nutter will soon leave office, his successor, Mayor-elect Jim Kenney, is interested in the program too, staff said.

"Jim thinks innovative financing programs like Pay for Success are interesting ways to fund programs that could make significant

program that hopes to expand using the "Pay for Success" model. APRIL SAUL

positive impacts on the city," said Kenney's policy director Jim Engler. "Jim is monitoring the success of similar programs at the state level and also in other cities and will use the lessons learned there to inform decisions made by his administration."

Kenney's word may soon be put to the test. There are at least two other Philly projects with plans brewing centered around PFS financing, said Noelle Baldini, a community engagement associate at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia: One would target recidivism, and another offer supportive housing for people with disabilities.

Considerable savings were predicted by a feasibility study the city of Philadelphia released this summer evaluating hypothetical anti-recidivism programs using PFS: For every dollar spent, the city would gain $1.70 in avoided costs, the authors of the study estimated.

Across the river, the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (CCHP) is planning a feasibility study of its own to see if PFS could aid their new Housing First program, which helps patients find places to live.

CCHP patient Peter Bowser just moved into his new house with fiancee Cheryl Pew, the first couple to get a residence through Housing First initiative.

Bowser used to live in Delaware, was married and working in the detailing department of a car dealership.

"My ex-wife and me got divorced, and she put me out," he said. "So my family told me to come back to New Jersey."

This was about two years ago. He was saddened to discover that family in Atlantic City didn't have a place for him, he explained, so he went to Camden, where he thought he could find opportunity. His asthma had been giving him more trouble over the years, making it tough to keep a regular gig. In shelters, his condition grew worse.

"From January of this year to August of this year, I've been in and out of the hospital at least 20 times," Bowser said.

But Bowser is one of the few at CCHP to be linked up with housing so far, where, according to policy and advocacy program assistant Sam Katz, homeless residents make up more than a third of their patients.

"Essentially what [our frontline staff] has told us over many years is that it's impossible to do their duties and improve health outcomes when so many residents are unstably housed or chronically homeless," Katz said.

If CCHP can get funding through PFS, the funds would cover wraparound services for the newly housed, and the outcomes would be fewer homeless patients on the streets.

"I have to pass on the baton, but the business of government has to continue," Nutter said. "The reality is there's only so much we can do on our own."

BRIEFS

Firetruck crashes in West Philly, 5 hurt

A firetruck en route to the scene of a fire crashed on Baltimore Avenue on Sunday morning, leaving firefighters with non-serious injuries.

"Mayday, mayday," firefighters can be heard radioing in to dispatch at the Philadelphia Fire Department. "We need an ambulance here now."

The five firefighters hurt in the crash sustained minor injuries, reports said.

The truck, containing firefighters from Ladder 13, was responding to a reported stove fire on Millick Street.

The firetruck was left blocking Baltimore Avenue after the accident, which occurred around 10:10 a.m. at 55th Street and Baltimore Avenue.

The parked cars were empty and no other injuries were reported. The cause of the crash is under investigation. METRO

The firetruck is seen crashed on Baltimore Avenue. BRIAN HYLAND

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JEFFREY KNUEPPEL

Ask SEPTA

SEPTA GENERAL MANAGER

Send your questions about SEPTA services and other issues about the transit agency to sam.newhouse@metro.us. They will be forwarded to Knueppel, who will answer them in a special monthly column here.

What exactly is SEPTA's policy regarding strollers on Regional Rail trains. I've gotten completely different answers depending on who and when I ask. One conductor refused to allow me to board until I had removed my 8-month-old daughter from the stroller and collapsed it. I see no reason why we should be forced to collapse our strollers when they can easily fit into the handicap area without blocking the aisle.

SEPTA has a system-wide policy regarding strollers on vehicles. When passengers are travelling with a child, the conductor or operator of the vehicle must request the child be seated or held by an adult. When the passengers are using a stroller, we require children to be removed from strollers, and strollers folded and placed in a secure position. These are safety measures intended to protect all of our riders. We believe that children are safer when held by their parents or placed in a seat. And when the stroller itself is stowed away properly, it is less likely to roll and cause injury.

With respect to posting this policy on board, we have limited space; however, we will look into the feasibility of adding a notice. Policies and other travel information are posted on our website, Septa .org/. We will also be issuing reminders to our employees to ensure consistency with the application of this policy.

I would like to know when improvements will come to Jefferson Station? The doors to the platform are heavy and often go against the movement of pedestrian flow. They seem too narrow for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Many of the electronic message boards are outdated, leading to frequent malfunctions. Also, will there be a dedicated underground connection between Jefferson Station and 11th St. of the Market-Frankford Line after the Gallery is reconstructed?

As a SEPTA rider who uses Jefferson Station daily, I understand and appreciate your concerns.

The direction in which the doors swing at platform level is determined by emergency egress requirements. The doors may feel heavy due to hardware installed for safety purposes — this prevents them from opening too quickly or hitting the adjacent wall. I have, however, recently requested the installation of new doors that will function in a much smoother fashion. This work will be completed in the new year.

The doors to the elevator lobby on Filbert Street, while narrow, meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for width, and are also consistent with historic preservation regulations.

Regarding the electronic message boards, we have started replacing signage, including displays that show train arrival information over the doors at the Reading Headhouse. This is an ongoing effort, and we look forward to having new digital displays throughout the station within the next two years.

For the underground connection between Jefferson Station and the 11th Street Station on the Market-Frankford Line Station, SEPTA is in ongoing discussions with the Gallery's owner regarding access during and after the mall reconstruction project.

A woman with her baby on a train. ISTOCK

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD / POLICY DOCUMENTS AND LEASE

The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) is requesting public comments and conducting a public hearing on the following policy and lease documents:

Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) – PHA's admissions and continued occupancy policies for conventional and scattered site public housing are described in the ACOP. A copy of the proposed ACOP and a summary of changes from the current version are available for public review as noted below.

Lease Agreement – The Lease Agreement is an agreement entered into between PHA and the Head(s) of Household for each PHA public housing unit. A copy of the proposed Lease Agreement and a summary of changes from the current version are available for public review as noted below.

Community Service Rider – The Community Service Rider is a rider to the Lease Agreement. PHA proposes to modify the Community Service Rider. A copy of the proposed Community Service Rider is available for public review as noted below.

Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan (Administrative Plan) – PHA's policies related to administration of the Housing Choice Voucher Program including admissions and continued occupancy policies are described in the Administrative Plan. A copy of the proposed Administrative Plan and a summary of changes from the current version are available for public review as noted below.

Copies of the above-listed documents are available for public review on PHA's website at www.pha.phila.gov under the "Latest News" section or may be picked up at:

Housing Choice Voucher Program Office:
2850 Germantown Ave 1st Floor

Scattered Sites Management Offices:
Abbotsford Homes – 3226 McMichael St. Wilson Park – 2500 Jackson St.
Westpark Apartments – 4445 Holden St. Fairhill Apartments – 2411 N.11th St.
Spring Garden Apartments – 715 Brandywine St.

Public Housing Management Offices:
Bartram - 5404 Gibson Drive
Raymond Rosen – 2110 N. 23rd St.

PHA residents, Housing Choice Voucher participants and the general public may provide oral comments on any of the above matters by attending the public hearing described below and/or by submitting written comments during the comment period. A public hearing will be conducted at the following time and location: **Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at 11:00 am, 12 South 23rd Street, 6th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19103**

The comment period begins on November 13, 2015 at 12 noon and ends on January 14, 2016 at 12 noon. Comments on any or all of the above matters must be received by the end of the comment period. Please send written comments to: Philadelphia Housing Authority, Policy Research and Enterprise Planning Office Attention: Policy Documents and Lease Comments 12 South 23rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

The public hearing is being held in an accessible location. If you require assistance, sign language interpreter or other accommodations, please call 215-684-4000. Please use the AT&T Relay Service for TTY.

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BRIEF

Three people dead, 12 injured in New Jersey crash with cow hauler

Three people died and a dozen were injured after a van crashed into a cattle trailer parked on the shoulder of a New Jersey highway, leaving the interstate strewn with dead cows, state police said on Sunday.

A man standing on the shoulder after his car struck the cattle trailer earlier and two van passengers died in the incident late Saturday on Interstate 287, New Jersey State Police said.

No charges had been filed in the incident as of Sunday morning, state police said.

Police said Troy Chase, 43, of Pittston, Maine, had stopped his truck on the right shoulder of the northbound lanes to repair a cattle trailer he was towing, when it was struck by a car driven by Ravi Naik, 23, of Hillsborough, New Jersey.

Naik exited the car and was standing on the shoulder when a passenger van carrying a dozen passengers struck the right guardrail, the trailer, the truck and Naik, before crossing the lanes and hitting the left guardrail, police said.

Naik was pronounced dead at a local hospital and two van passengers were pronounced dead at the scene, police said. The dozen injured included Chase and the van's driver, Xu Feng Ma, police said. None of the injuries were life-threatening.

REUTERS

REVISED

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Fairhill Apartments – 2411 N.11th Street

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Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at 11:00 am
12 South 23rd Street, 6th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19103

The comment period begins on December 17, 2015 and ends on January 15, 2016 at 12 noon. Comments on any or all of the above matters must be received by the end of the comment period. Please send written comments to: Philadelphia Housing Authority, Policy Research and Enterprise Planning Office Attention: Policy Documents and Lease Comments 12 South 23rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

The public hearing is being held in an accessible location. If you require assistance, sign language interpreter or other accommodations, please call 215-684-4000. Please use the AT&T Relay Service for TTY

Customers shop for electronics and other items at a Best Buy on Nov. 27, 2015, in Skokie, Illinois. GETTY IMAGES

Store sales down slightly for Thanksgiving and Black Friday

Sales at U.S. brick-and-mortar stores on Thanksgiving Day and Black Friday were down slightly from last year, but the performance was still seen as strong in a holiday shopping season where discounts spread well beyond the weekend and many shoppers moved to the Web.

Online sales were up by double digits, according to data released on Saturday.

Data from analytics firm RetailNext showed overall sales for both days fell 1.5 percent on flat customer traffic, while average spending per shopper dropped 1.4 percent.

Preliminary data from ShopperTrak showed sales at stores totaled about $12.1 billion on Thursday and Friday. The company said it is an "estimated decrease from last year" but did not give the percentage decline due to an internal change in the way it calculates data. Last year, it reported sales of $12.29 billion for the same period.

ShopperTrak will release its final sales numbers on Tuesday. It stuck by its forecast of a 2.4 percent increase for November and December sales.

The data highlights the waning importance of Black Friday, which until a few years ago kicked off the holiday shopping season, as more retailers start discounting earlier in the month and open their doors on Thanksgiving Day.

Both firms said that despite the fall in sales over the two days, the performance must be interpreted as a good one for retail stores because sales held up amid rising competition from online shopping and were better than expected due to pent-up consumer demand and lower gas prices.

Brick-and-mortar retailers who have online operations offered better Web deals during Thanksgiving and Black Friday and saw higher sales than online only retailers, said Tamara Gaffney, principal research analyst at Adobe Digital Index.

She said discounting levels online averaged 26 and 24 percent on both days respectively, and remained similar to last year's levels.

REUTERS

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'I was 100 percent right' on 9/11 Muslim remarks

The controversy could be starting to hurt Trump, who has dropped 12 percentage points in the polls in the past five days. He fell from 43 percent to 31 percent.

U.S. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump insisted on Sunday he was "100 percent right" when he said he saw thousands of Muslims in Jersey City, New Jersey, cheering the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, even though fact-checkers have debunked his assertion.

In a phone interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," Trump said he has heard from "hundreds of people who agree" that there were televised Muslim celebrations of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, which he used as evidence to show his remarks were true.

"I saw it. So many people saw it," said Trump, who, in the race for the November 2016 election, has been among the most vocal of the Republican candidates in expressing skepticism about Muslims in the United States. "So, why would I take it back? I'm not going to take it back."

When NBC anchor Chuck Todd suggested the people Trump heard from are supporters and might want to agree with him, Trump interrupted to note the "huge Muslim population" New Jersey has.

"Why wouldn't it have taken place?" he said of a celebration there. "I've had hundreds of people call in and tweet in on Twitter, saying that they saw it and I was 100 percent right."

Donald Trump GETTY IMAGES

Trump came under fire last week after saying at a rally and on television that he had seen thousands of people in Jersey City cheer the collapse of the twin towers in Manhattan.

His remarks have since been disputed by public officials and fellow Republican candidate New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who said: "I think if it had happened, I would remember it."

When his remarks were revisited on NBC, Trump said: "All over the world — forget about New Jersey for a second — all over the world, it was reported that Muslims were celebrating the fall of the World Trade Center."

But he quickly rejected Todd's assertion that "this didn't happen in New Jersey."

"It did happen in New Jersey," Trump said.

"I have a very good memory, I'll tell you," he said. "I saw it somewhere on television many years ago. And I never forgot it."

REUTERS

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EU wants to give national privacy regulators more clout in data pact

The European Union wants to enhance the power of the bloc's national privacy regulators in policing a planned new EU-U.S. data pact after the previous one was struck down by a top EU court on concerns about mass U.S. surveillance.

Brussels and Washington are locked in negotiations to forge a new framework enabling data transfers from Europe to the United States, which are otherwise subject to cumbersome and lengthy legal processes under EU data protection law.

The previous pact, known as Safe Harbour and used by over 4,000 U.S. and European companies, was declared invalid by the European Court of Justice in October because U.S. national security needs trumped the privacy of Europeans' data.

The U.S. flag and the flag of the European Union GETTY IMAGES

To address the court's concerns, particularly that Europeans do not have legal channels to challenge misuse of their data, the Commission is looking for ways to involve European privacy watchdogs more deeply.

REUTERS

BRIEF

Ben Carson, after visit to refugee camp, says Syrians want to go home

Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson, after a visit to a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan this weekend, said on Sunday that the refugees do not want to come to the United States and would prefer to return to Syria.

But Carson, one of the leaders in the polls in the contest for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016, offered few details on how he would work to defeat Islamic State militants and stabilize Syria to enable the refugees' return.

"We're hearing that they all want to come here to the United States, and that's not what they want. They want to go back home," Carson said on the ABC news program "This Week."

In a round of television interviews from Jordan, Carson also defended comments he made earlier this month in which he compared Americans' attitude toward Syrian refugees to their fear of a rabid dog in their neighborhood.

"The Syrians and the people here completely understood what I was saying," Carson told NBC's "Meet the Press." "It's only the news media in our country that thinks that you're calling Syrians dogs. They understand here that we're talking about the jihadists, the Islamic terrorists."

Carson, a retired neurosurgeon who has faced scrutiny over his foreign policy credentials, visited the Zaatari camp for refugees fleeing Syria's civil war, and said he also spoke with medical personnel, humanitarian workers and government officials.

In the ABC interview, Carson called for increased U.S. aid for regional refugee efforts such as those in Jordan.

He said believes that greater contributions to such facilities in the region could eliminate security risks associated with granting U.S. asylum to Syrian refugees.

Carson said that Islamic State should be defeated quickly and criticized the current U.S. strategy as "piecemeal."

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Planned Parenthood says Colorado shooter opposed abortion

In addition to the three fatalities, nine people were injured, including five police officers.

Robert L. Dear is seen in an undated picture released by the Colorado Springs Police Department. COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT HANDOUT

Planned Parenthood said on Sunday that news reports that the gunman who attacked its Colorado health clinic had uttered "no more baby parts" during his arrest showed that the suspect was motivated by an anti-abortion agenda.

The remark attributed to the suspect, identified by police as Robert Lewis Dear, was an apparent reference to Planned Parenthood's abortion activities and its role in delivering fetal tissue to medical researchers, a hot-button issue in the 2016 race for the presidency.

"We now know the man responsible for the tragic shooting at PP's health center in Colorado was motivated by opposition to safe and legal abortion," the organization said on Twitter.

Conservatives have accused Planned Parenthood, a nonprofit that provides a range of health services, including abortion, of illegally selling baby parts, an accusation it has strenuously denied.

Dear, a 57-year-old South Carolina native

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Nasya Fair looks at the growing memorial for the shooting victims with her son Korbyn, 4, at Fillmore Street and Centennial Boulevard on November 29, 2015, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. GETTY IMAGES

who moved to Colorado, made the remarks during his arrest after a standoff lasting several hours at the Colorado Springs clinic on Friday, NBC News and other media outlets reported.

Reuters was unable to independently confirm those reports of Dear's comments though the reports cited unnamed law enforcement sources.

While Dear's remarks could hint at a possible motive for Friday's rampage, NBC's sources stressed that investigators were still not sure why the gunman launched the attack.

Authorities have steadfastly declined to discuss a motive for the attack, saying their investigation was still under way.

But Colorado Springs police on Sunday sent a tweet that said unofficial leaks could jeopardize the investigation and prosecution, without specifically mentioning the words attributed to Dear.

Dear, who appeared to have moved to a remote community in Colorado last year, has been jailed ahead of a court appearance scheduled for Monday.

The shooting was believed to be the first deadly attack at an abortion provider in the United States in six years. The Colorado Springs center has been repeatedly targeted for protests by anti-abortion activists. REUTERS

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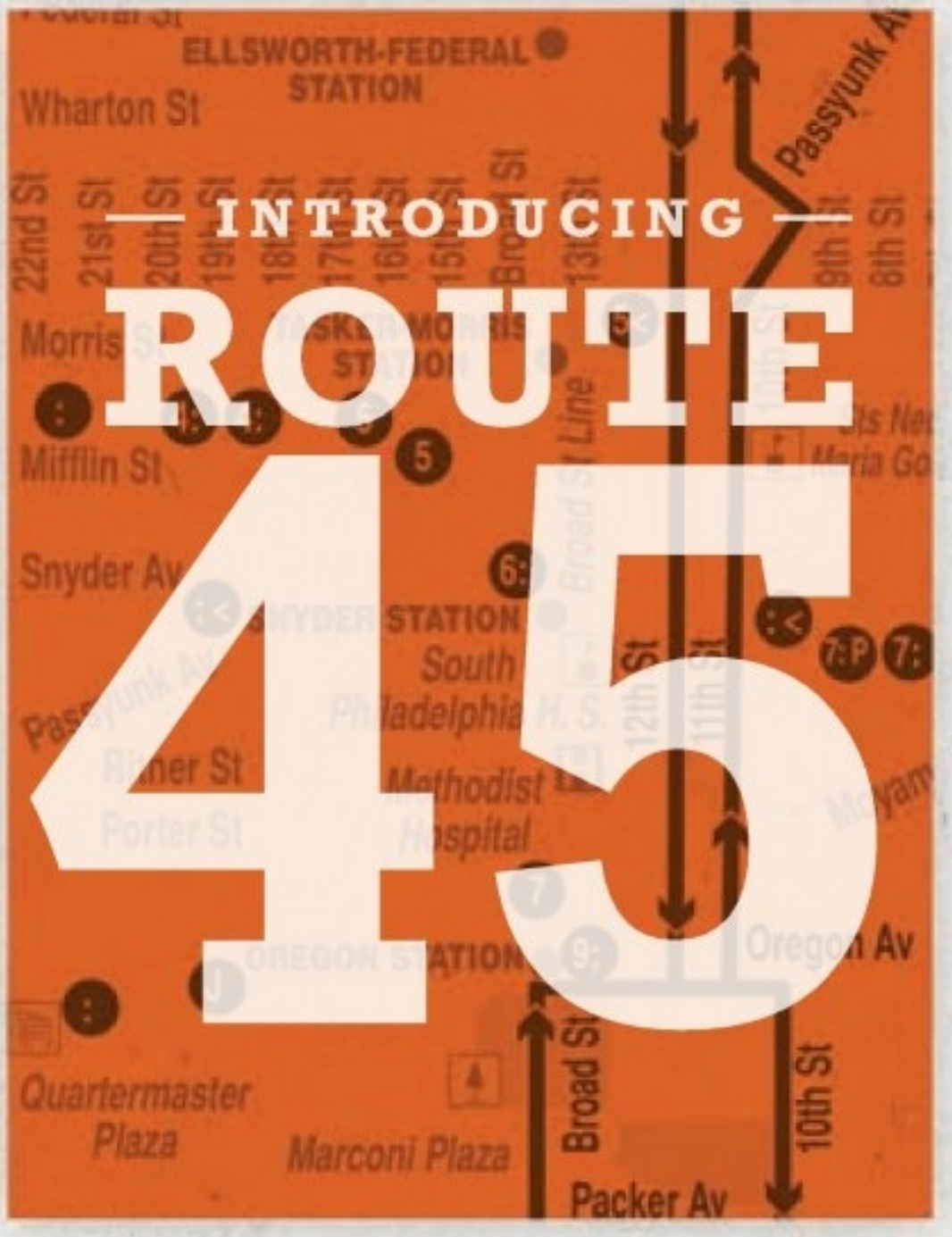

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Anne Hathaway's in a family way

Look, guys! Something else came true! Oscar winner Anne Hathaway stepped out over the weekend with a very noticeable midsection bulge, alerting the world to the fact that she and husband Adam Shulman are expecting their first child. "Anne is in her second trimester and feeling great," a source tells E! News. Though there's been no official announcement, speculation started in September when she was doing press for "The Intern" and starting to show a bit. Hathaway and Shulman were married in 2012, and Hathaway has not been shy in interviews about their intentions to start a family.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Tracy Morgan says he talked to God

Tracy Morgan is opening up about the horrific car accident in June 2014 that left him in a coma and took the life of his friend James McNair, and some of it may surprise you. Morgan tells Complex magazine that he "went to the other side" and talked to God. "This is not something I'm making up," he insists. "Do you know what God said to me? He said, 'Your room ain't ready. I still got something for you to do.' And here I am, doing an interview with you."

He also gets candid about just how much his life has changed since his recovery. "You're never going to be normal after you go through something like that. You don't die for a few weeks and then come back to normal, trust me," he says. "Something's going to be missing, something's going to be gained — you just got to live your life after that. But after surviving something like that, I'm probably never going to feel normal." That's heavy, man.

Ice T's newborn has more Twitter followers than you

While you were spending the weekend binge-watching "The Great British Bake-Off," Ice T and Coco were welcoming their first daughter to the world — and to the world of social media. Baby girl Chanel Nicole was born on Saturday morning, and within hours she had her first post on her own Twitter account up. And by the end of the weekend she had more than 14,000 followers. Still no word on a blue check mark from Twitter, though. Maybe that's more of a christening present.

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Dan Soder gets personal

The "Guy Code" comic is taping his first hourlong Comedy Central special at the Troc.

RACHEL VIGODA
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Dan Soder is pumped for his first hourlong Comedy Central special — an upgrade from his 30-minute show a couple of years ago.

"A full hour! I'm very, very, very excited about it," Soder says of the special, which he'll be taping live over two back-to-back performances at the Trocadero in Philly on Dec. 3.

His career is expanding in other ways, too: Soder is on the upcoming "Billions" on Showtime, with Damian Lewis and Paul Giamatti. The show, a drama about the high stakes world of high finance, premiering Jan. 17, 2016, is a far cry from standup.

The "Billions" trailer is so intense. Are you playing a serious role?

It's such a cool show. I have a small but regular role on it. … I play a loud a—hole.

Did you feel like you were typecast?

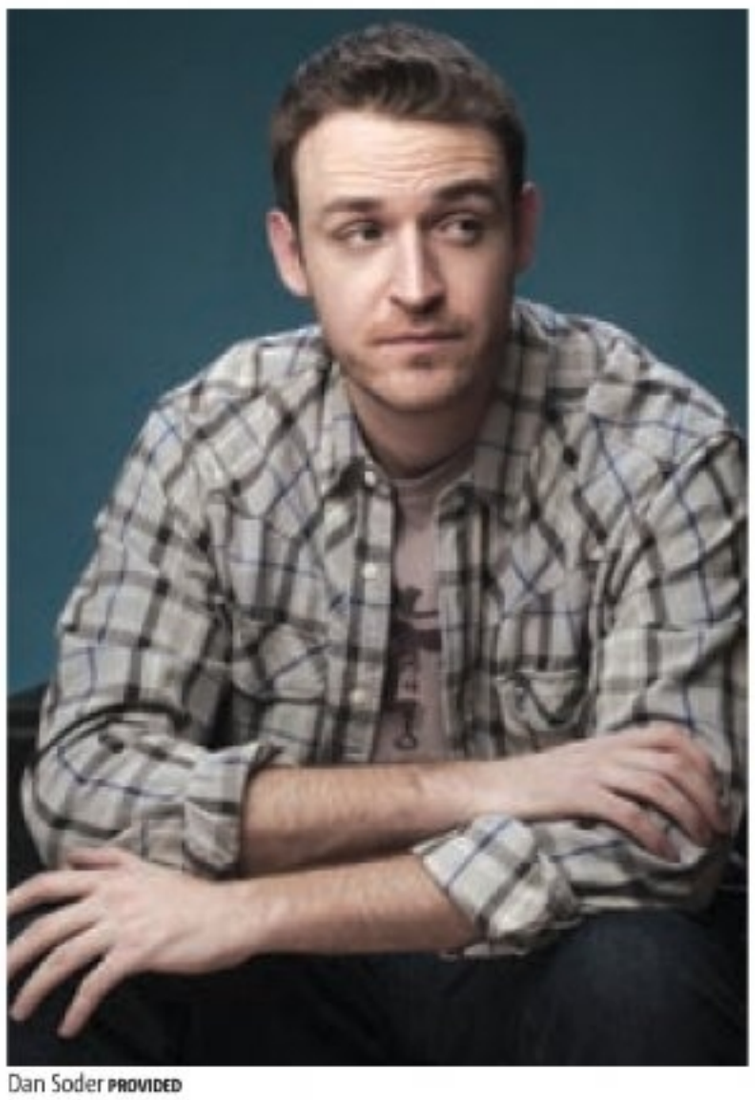
[Laughs] I think me being a comedian helps me being able to turn up the obnoxiousness.

Are you feeling nervous at all about the Comedy Central special?

I just want it to be good, so I get nervous. It's two shows at a great venue so you just want to do the very best you can. I'm a little bit of a perfectionist so I want it to be two really, really great shows.

Do you have someone you practice in front of?

My roommate is a very funny comedian named Mike Vecchione — he actually used to live in Philly. He can tell me if he's heard anyone else do a joke. It's a great way to have a litmus test of what's original, what's been done.



Dan Soder PROVIDED

Do you ever try something, and he says, "No, absolutely not"?

Oh yeah. Yeah, all the time. Though I don't know if it's that coarse. [Laughs] But he'll be like, "Ah, I don't know."

What can people coming out to the Troc expect to hear you talking about?

My act is kind of about where I'm at in my life. Being an older pothead, while all my friends are having kids. Looking back on my childhood and acknowledging that I was maybe not the easiest kid to raise. People always ask what kind of style of comedy I do, and I never really have a good answer for that. I just wind up saying it's personal — one of the great things about comedy is you can take all this personal stuff that happened to you and make it super funny.

Dan Soder

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Why we still need 'Trumbo'

Director Jay Roach thinks not much has changed since the Hollywood blacklist days.

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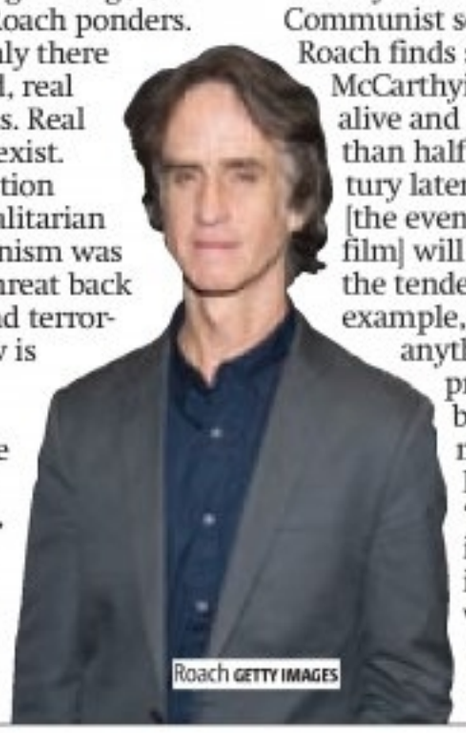
Director Jay Roach goes inside a dark patch of Hollywood history with "Trumbo," chronicling the persecution of Dalton Trumbo (Bryan Cranston) and the rest of the Hollywood Ten that kicked off the blacklist amid anti-Communist hysteria stoked by the House Un-American Activities Committee. We've come a long way from that kind of fear-mongering and reactionary politics, right?

Not quite. In making the film, Roach has been forced to examine how much hasn't changed.

"Isn't it kind of like things that go on now?" Roach ponders. "Certainly there are valid, real concerns. Real threats exist. No question that totalitarian communism was a true threat back then, and terrorism now is a true threat. But once there is a threat, there's almost no chance it won't be exploited to raise a kind of hysteria that leads to smearing people with labeling and tying them to that threat."



Roach GETTY IMAGES

Even when specifically discussing anti-Communist sentiments, Roach finds strains of McCarthyism still alive and well more than half a century later. "I hope [the events of the film] will stand for the tendency, for example, to label anything that's pro-worker as being 'Communist,'" he says. "If you're interested in giving workers more safety on the job,

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Jay Roach directs Bryan Cranston as Dalton Trumbo in "Trumbo," in theaters now. HILARY BRONWYN GAYLE

health benefits and not working 80-hour or 100-hour weeks, you must be a Communist."

You can definitely see fear-mongering in other avenues, Roach says, especially in the current presidential race. "Other [fears] are selling now. 'Immigrants are destroying America,' says Donald Trump. Those memes are old hat — they're old chestnuts now, and I'm always amazed and surprised by it," he says. "Even looking back, I'm astonished in myself that I went, 'How could that have possibly happened in America, that these writers could be thrown under that bus?' And I go, 'Oh, right, there's another bus to throw people under right now.'"

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Daniel Radcliffe and James McAvoy blind with science

James McAvoy's Victor Frankenstein works closely with Daniel Radcliffe's Igor, who doesn't have a massive hump on his back in this version. ALEX BAILEY

The two actors got to play with tradition in the oddball origin story "Victor Frankenstein."

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In "Victor Frankenstein," James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe join a long tradition of actors, usually British, playing Mary Shelley's mad scientist and his assistant. But they are the first to play with this dynamic: Instead of Frankenstein's lowly, hunchbacked helper, Igor is a London dandy, plus a medical genius in his own way. It also allowed the two actors to goof around on the set of a particularly nutty take on a classic.

This is your first time working together, but you seem to have a mutual admiration. What was your relationship like on set?

James McAvoy: When I have to work with people I don't like, I think they are really horrible. I generally never argue with them, either. We got on really well. There was no arguing.

Daniel Radcliffe: Yeah. I think that the image people have of actors being constantly at war with each other isn't generally the case.

What is your relationship with science? What grades did you get at school in physics and chemistry?

McAvoy: I didn't take physics. But I did take chemistry and biology for a very short time. And in chemistry, I think I got a C, and in biology a B-. And then when I grew old enough to choose subjects I would specialize in, I dropped them both and took English and music. I always enjoyed science at school, and I enjoy hearing scientists talk about science. But I'm definitely glad I don't have to learn it or do it.

We are all going to die someday. Would you like to be raised from the dead by some genius?

Radcliffe: Yeah, as long as I'm the only one. [Laughs] And ideally he won't do it to everybody, so that there are lots of dead walking

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The big questions

Creating life is like playing God. Do you believe in God? Have you ever wanted to challenge God?
McAvoy: Yeah.
Radcliffe: No.
McAvoy: Even people with great faith and those who have a close relationship to God challenge him, like his son. We all challenge things we believe. Victor is challenging God. "I can do it better" — that's what he's saying. There is an idea of God-creator and the idea of faith. We are moving towards it every day, trying to become people. It's an everyday life. And that is what the Frankenstein story is about.

around. I'd like to think about myself as special.

At the beginning of the film, Daniel's character doesn't have a name. Do you know this feeling? Have you ever wanted to be anonymous?
Radcliffe: As actors we put a mask on and become nobody and anonymous in that way. In real life, you often don't want to be well known nor famous, and sometimes I remember I don't want to be an actor anymore.
McAvoy: The nice thing about being an actor is that on every single job, it's like a clean slate — a new director, new crew, maybe even a new country, new language, all that kind of stuff. And you kind of go, "All right, that last job was a f—ing nightmare." Maybe I wasn't who I wanted to be or wasn't at my best. But what is great about acting is that you are not pretending to be someone else but trying to be your better self.

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How to score deals on the most in-demand toys

The Toy Insider's Laurie Schacht tells us what kids want under the Christmas tree this year. Plus, where to get the biggest savings.

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In 1996, fights broke out over Tickle Me Elmo. In 2000, no store could keep the Razor scooter in stock. This year, there are a few different big-ticket items that millions of kids are all putting on their list for Santa. Here are the top three.

"Star Wars" Bladebuilders Jedi Master Lightsaber

"This year, one of the biggest demands you're going to see is all about 'Star Wars,'" says renowned toy expert Laurie Schacht, also known as The Toy Insider. "We're seeing the Force strong!"

Schacht says the toy industry is expected to see a whopping 7 percent growth this holiday season (usually there is only a 1 percent to 2 percent flux), largely thanks to "Star Wars."

There's a wide range of toys for "Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens," but Schacht says one of the hottest is Bladebuilders Jedi Master Lightsaber, which comes with a big lightsaber, two smaller ones and accessories so kids can build and customize their own lightsaber.

Where to score a Cyber Monday deal: Get this toy for $35.96 with the code BNFAMILY20 at Barnesandnoble.com.

"Star Wars" Bladebuilders Jedi Master Lightsaber $54.99

ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED

Girl Scouts Cookie Oven $44.99

Girl Scouts Cookie Oven

"Cooking is a huge trend this year," Schacht says. In addition to a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Pizza Oven coming out early next month, the Girl Scouts Cookie Oven is already on many little bakers' Christmas lists. "It's a real working oven, and all of the recipes are for Girl Scouts-inspired cookies. And each oven comes with Thin Mints," says Schacht.

Where to score a Cyber Monday deal: GirlScoutShop.com is selling this toy for $39.99 until the end of Cyber Monday only. No coupon code required.

Hello Barbie

This toy had kids talking before it even hit the market last week. "When you hold Barbie's belt buckle, she listens to you when you talk to her and responds appropriately," Schacht says. "She remembers things you like, don't like, if you've had a good or bad day, and then she'll ask you about it later. … She is the beginning of what you are going to see with toys that talk back."

Where to score a Cyber Monday deal: Save 20 percent on Hello Barbie at Target.com with the code TOYS.

Hello Barbie $75

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How to avoid Cyber Monday scams

Shop smartly and safely this holiday season. ISTOCK

We're officially in the hectic holiday shopping season. Here's how to avoid traps when buying online.

DMITRY BELYAEV
Metro World News
letters@metro.us

Millions of shoppers will hit retailers' websites today, expecting serious discounts and promotions.

But be aware: Online stores never close, so you can casually browse from the comfort of your couch, and cyber shopping hysteria can lead you to make impulse buys.

"It causes many people to shop more often and make unnecessary purchases or splurges," says Andrea Woroch, a consumer and money-saving expert. "Especially since many [retailers' sites] keep payment information saved, buying something with a single tap leads to huge overspending."

Buying online can also become tricky when it comes to clothes and shoes, because you can't try them on. And colors on may appear different on your computer or tablet screen than they actually are. Plus, you can't feel the quality of the material. This is why experts advise to only buy brands you're familiar with. "Don't browse for fun," Woroch says. "Give yourself time to think through the purchase. The necessity to shop may pass, and you will forget about those items. Placing goods in your virtual cart is not the best way to fulfill that urge to buy and spend."

Compare prices

It's important to shop around before buying something. Luckily, you can compare prices using sites such as PriceGrabber. Another comparison site, InvisibleHand, alerts shoppers if something they're browsing is sold on another site for less.

Track discounts

There are many outlets where you can buy what you need, but always make sure to pick the best price. TrackIf monitors sites, pages and searches, and alerts you when something becomes available, the cost of an item drops or there is a special offer.

Use coupons

Sites like CouponSherpa offer codes for discounts on your online order as well as free shipping deals. Reading Sherpa's blog may also be helpful for learning tips and tricks on saving money everyday, not just during the holidays.

Investigate other opinions

Read reports for different products at Epinions or Buzzillions. Both websites provide consumer-generated reviews and ratings of items you want to buy. Patiently research pros and cons, and only then make a decision.

Avoid sketchy sites

The Internet is rife with scam sites, so it's crucial to make sure you're doing business with legitimate retailers. Check out GetLinkInfo.com to verify a site you're less familiar with. It will show, for example, the amount of unsafe links a certain site contains, and if the site is malware-free.

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Shoppers are buying up "Star Wars" merchandise. GETTY IMAGES

Studying the shopping trends

An expert tells us what people are buying this holiday season (hint: "Star Wars" merch), and where they're buying it.

MITCH LIPKA
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With the holiday shopping season in full swing, the number of promotional sales online and in stores climb, and choices become more and more daunting.

What is a good deal? Where? When?

Analysts study the biggest U.S. retailers and take hard looks at what goes on inside their stores each holiday season, making visits and poring over balance sheets.

Charlie O'Shea, a vice president at Moody's Investors Service, follows Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Target Corp., Kohls Corp., Toys "R" Us Inc. and Best Buy Co. — some of the biggest forces during the holiday shopping season.

O'Shea shared some insights on what to expect this year.

Is there any shopping trend for 2015 that looks different from prior years?

The holiday shopping season started far earlier this year due to the early "Star Wars" toy launch ["Star Wars: The Force Awakens" opens Dec. 18], which we believe pulled some sales forward.

You've been visiting retailers throughout Thanksgiving weekend for a decade. What do you look for?

What people buy. It's always TVs and consumer electronics. I'm looking in the shopping carts when I'm in the stores. Did they buy a DVD player? Did they buy a theater system? Did they also buy an HDMI cable or surge protector? Those are high-margin items. If people come out with a device and a shopping bag, the shopping bag is where the money is.

What specific stores or chains appear to be taking more aggressive pricing or discounting strategies this year?

Wal-Mart will set the tone for pricing and promotion this holiday, with Amazon a close second. The challenge for the competition is how low to go, and how early.

Are there any products shaping up to be must-haves this year?

Electronics will continue to be the hottest category. Four-K TV prices have come down. My guess is they'll be heavily promoted. They're hard to ship because they're so thin. On the toy side, "Star Wars" merchandise will be a key driver. My sense is that after the movie opens, you could see some further promotions.

When does it make more sense for consumers to go to brick-and-mortar stores for holiday gifts rather than shop online?

Given that 93 percent of sales are done in a brick-and-mortar location, clearly there is a lot of shopping done via physical stores. For high-end products, consumers are more apt to want to see it and touch it, and likely take it with them to ensure they have it. As we have seen the last few holidays, shipping guarantees can be hollow, with some merchandise not received on time. Theft is an issue as well. We also believe consumers are concerned about theft and may be hesitant to have a box left on their porch or driveway for fear it may be stolen. REUTERS

Want a great work-life balance, awesome pay and a rewarding career? Here's why data scientists have the "sexiest" jobs ever.

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Is data scientist the sexiest job of the 21st century? That's what the Harvard Business Review said back in 2012, and now the rest of the world seems to be catching up. Forbes has recently ranked data science the No. 1 career for work-life balance, while Careercast has named it the sixth-best job for 2015.

That's partly because of high salaries (average $115,000), but there's also a growing demand for the job. Companies want workers who can look at the information their products or services generate to glean all sorts of insights that could boost efficiency, safety\ or profits.

"The applications are really broad," says Shanji Xiong, chief scientist for Experian's Global DataLabs, which uses data innovation to solve strategic marketing and risk-management problems in financial services, telecommunications and health care. "Almost every aspect of our lives today has data and a data scientist behind it. Whether you're driving your car, you're cooking your meal — every step along the way there's a lot of data science behind the scenes making it possible."

We asked Shanji why he loves his job.

You can study anything and be a data scientist.

There's no such thing as a data science degree — yet, anyway. And while most data scientists do come from fields like computer science, engineering or mathematics, Shanji says, they don't need to. "I run into data scientists who come from more liberal arts backgrounds: economics, finance, other sciences," he says. "To me, data science is a whole spectrum of capabilities and profiles, because it's constantly developing, you're constantly learning, and it can be applied to anything — likely something you have some familiarity with." All you need, he adds, is a little coding experience and a desire to learn.

It's creative

If you think data science means just staring at a computer all day crunching numbers, you're wrong. A data scientist is like a designer, with an equal dose of mathematical application and intuition. "The thing about being a data scientist is that you have the data, but that data doesn't talk to you directly," Shanji says. "It's up to you, the data scientist, to try to understand what kind of information is in the data and then designing the tools to detect larger patterns" or more nuanced, niche information.

It's rewarding

Another thing you might not assume: It's really fun. Shanji describes a work environment that's built on collaboration, bouncing ideas off one another and working with people of all different backgrounds and skills. "We're not concentrating on immediate revenue, but on longer-term, high-impact projects," he says. He cites work that his company does with health services to determine things like how to reduce a hospital readmittance rate or how to get patients to take meds. "Data science can do so much, but at its best it can be an advantage to our society."

Want to become a data scientist? Here's how

1. Take a free online course to see if it's something that you actually want to do. Shanji recommends a course in statistics or motion learning, which you can find at sites like Coursera.
2. If you decide that data science is something you want to pursue, go ahead and learn one programming language that's widely used in the field. That will allow you to advance to the next step, which is:
3. Get your hands dirty by trying out a data-mining project. (Kaggle has a ton of tests you can play with.)
4. Befriend some practicing data scientists so you can get their feedback and perspective, and to see the sorts of projects they're working on. LinkedIn, or another social media group, devoted to the subject is a good place to start.

History not on Flyers' side

The Flyers' current place in the standings does not bode well at all for a playoff spot.

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Wayne Simmonds and the Flyers scored an upset road win over the Rangers this past weekend but their overall outlook does not look too promising. GETTY IMAGES

There's a strong possibility the Flyers are going to miss the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the third time in the last four years.

OK, we admit this is not breaking news. Between their anemic offense, awful special teams, mediocre defense and lack of consistency, the team has been mostly a mess through the first two months of the season and hasn't resembled a playoff-caliber squad.

However, the most telling sign that rookie coach Dave Hakstol's roster will likely remain home again after their regular season finale on Saturday, April 9 is where they stood in the standings on Thanksgiving. Yes, it seems a bit odd to quantify their postseason possibilities before Black Friday, but history is on our side here. Consider that since the 2004-2005 season, only less than a quarter of the teams not in a playoff spot on turkey day rallied to make the playoffs, according to STATS. Even harsher, in the Eastern Conference in the last seven years, only eight teams not in a playoff spot on Thanksgiving got in.

Instituted two years ago, the new playoff format has the top three teams from each division automatically advancing, plus the next two teams with the most points in the conference move on as wild card teams.

As everyone in Philadelphia sat down for their turkey dinner, the Flyers were in seventh place in the Metropolitan Division, trailed the Penguins by seven points for third place and were six points behind three teams that are tied for the two wild card spots.

There are still four-plus months of hockey left, and in 2013-14 the Flyers were one of those teams that overcame the odds to reach the postseason despite not sitting in a playoff spot on the fourth Thursday in November. They rebounded from a woeful 1-7 start to qualify before losing in seven games in the first round to the Rangers.

Plus, they have looked much sharper in back-to-back wins over the Predators and Rangers this weekend and have won three of their last four games. The 3-0 victory in New York ended a 10-game regular-season losing streak at Madison Square Garden and marked the first victory in that building since March 6, 2011. It was also the first time they nabbed consecutive wins since late October.

"I believe in this team," backup goalie Michal Neuvirth said last week. "We've got good players and we just got to stick to the system and believe in ourselves."

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Giants fall, entire NFC East now under .500

The Redskins toppled the Giants in D.C. and the two teams are now tied atop the division.

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Eli Manning faces pressure against the Redskins on Sunday. GETTY IMAGES

New York's furious fourth-quarter comeback came up just short in Sunday's 20-14 loss to the Redskins. The win moves the Skins into a tie for first place in the NFC East with New York.

For three quarters this game was all Washington, and it had a 20-0 lead to show for it. DeSean Jackson had a 63-yard score in this game.

The Giants won when the two teams met earlier this season.

Chiefs 30, Bills 22
For the first time this season, Kansas City is finally above .500. Jeremy Maclin, whose arrival was responsible for much of the off-season promise attributed to the Chiefs, had his best game in red-and-white, catching nine balls for 160 yards, including a 41-yard touchdown.

Jets 38, Dolphins 20
Ryan Fitzpatrick (22 of 37, 277 yards, 4 TDs) and Ryan Tannehill (33 of 58, 351 yards, 3 TDs, INT) combined for seven touchdown passes, and the Dolphins abandoned any pretense of a run game, finishing with nine team carries for 12 yards.

Vikings 20, Falcons 10
Adrian Peterson found the end zone in the first and fourth quarters, and saw a lot more action along the way for Minnesota, tallying up 158 rushing yards as the Vikings kept the ball away from the Falcons. The Vikings grabbed sole possession of first place in the NFC North following Green Bay's loss to Chicago Thanksgiving night. Atlanta's Tevin Coleman had his most productive day as a pro with 110 yards rushing in place of Devonta Freeman, out with a concussion.

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Temple football not yet satisfied

The Owls hoisted a trophy this past weekend, but want more this December.

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Cole Boozer and his Owls teammates celebrate an AAC East division title Saturday night. GETTY IMAGES

Back in September, the prospect of a home team with a bird as its mascot celebrating a division championship at the Linc wouldn't have come as much of a surprise. But the idea that that team wouldn't be the Eagles, but the Temple Owls — now that would've qualified as a shocker.

Late Saturday night, with a slight drizzle coming down and a sea of cherry and white filling the field following a decisive 27-3 romp over UConn, there were the Temple Owls basking in the moment — hoisting the American Athletic Conference East championship trophy. Two years after sinking to the depths — going 2-10 in Matt Rhule's first season — these Owls have hit the heights. Although they won't consider the job done unless they knock off AAC West champion Houston next Saturday at high noon, in Texas, in the conference title game.

"There's no greater feeling than holding that trophy in your hands, but we can't be satisfied," said do-everything linebacker Tyler Matakevich, who stuck it to his home-state school with 11 tackles Saturday, giving him 473 for his career. "We didn't work this hard all year just to get there.

"But it's such an amazing feeling. To go 2-10, 6-6 and now to be 10-2, that's extraordinary. I don't think too many programs in the country can do that. I've got to give credit to all of us seniors. We just stuck it out when times were tough. We fought through it and kept buying in and here's our reward."

They'll get an 11-1 Cougars squad coming off a 52-21 rout of Navy to clinch the Western crown. A week earlier, though, Houston was defeated by the same UConn team Temple demolished Saturday. While Connecticut's defense kept it within striking distance — down just 10-0 at the half and 13-0 late in the third—the Huskies' offense was completely nonexistent thanks to an overwhelming effort by the Owls defense. UConn had just 65 net yards through three quarters, before Rhule cleared his bench, allowing them to finish with 138 yards and a meaningless field goal to spoil Temple's shutout bid. It marked the fourth time this season that the Owls held an opponent to 180 yards or less.

Not a bad way to go out on Senior Night, as the Owls reached 10 wins for only the second time in school history.

"You can't let the moment get too big,"

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Matakevich, said, echoing the words of his coach. "Knowing it's your last home game and Senior Night — kids tend to struggle, emotions start affecting the way they play. He told us, 'You can't let that happen. Just take a deep breath, do what you've been doing all year. Go play and have fun.'"

It wasn't exactly "fun" for the 6-foot-1, 232-pound Matakevich and the other 21 seniors early in their Temple careers as they suffered through a 4-7 year in 2012 under Steve Addazio, who promptly decided to bolt for Boston College.

"We go 4-7 with Addazio," recalled Matakevich, a finalist for the prestigious Butkus Award as the nation's top interior linebacker. "Then we get a new coach. Guys don't know what to do. Some want to leave. Some want to stay. Then we go 2-10 and guys are saying, 'What's going on? I didn't stick around for this.' But I kept telling them it's gonna change."

The culmination of that change came shortly after 10 p.m. Saturday, as the delirious players went out to salute their cheering fans in the stands, singing the alma mater, followed by a rousing rendition of the Temple fight song. The celebration continued in the locker room, while their coach — already dealing with rumors that he's under consideration for the Missouri job — spoke to the character of his players, who refused to be defined by a losing mentality that had been permeating campus.

"I'm just really proud of our kids," said Rhule, who gets credit for keeping them together when it would've been easy to see it fall apart. "As a team, we talked about how perseverance conquers has been the story of this team over the last three years.

"It's really the motto of Temple University. To win the East is a big deal for us as well as having the chance to be in the first ever [AAC] championship game.

"As I just told the guys, the rewards are great, but what I want to see is for us to play great in big moments."

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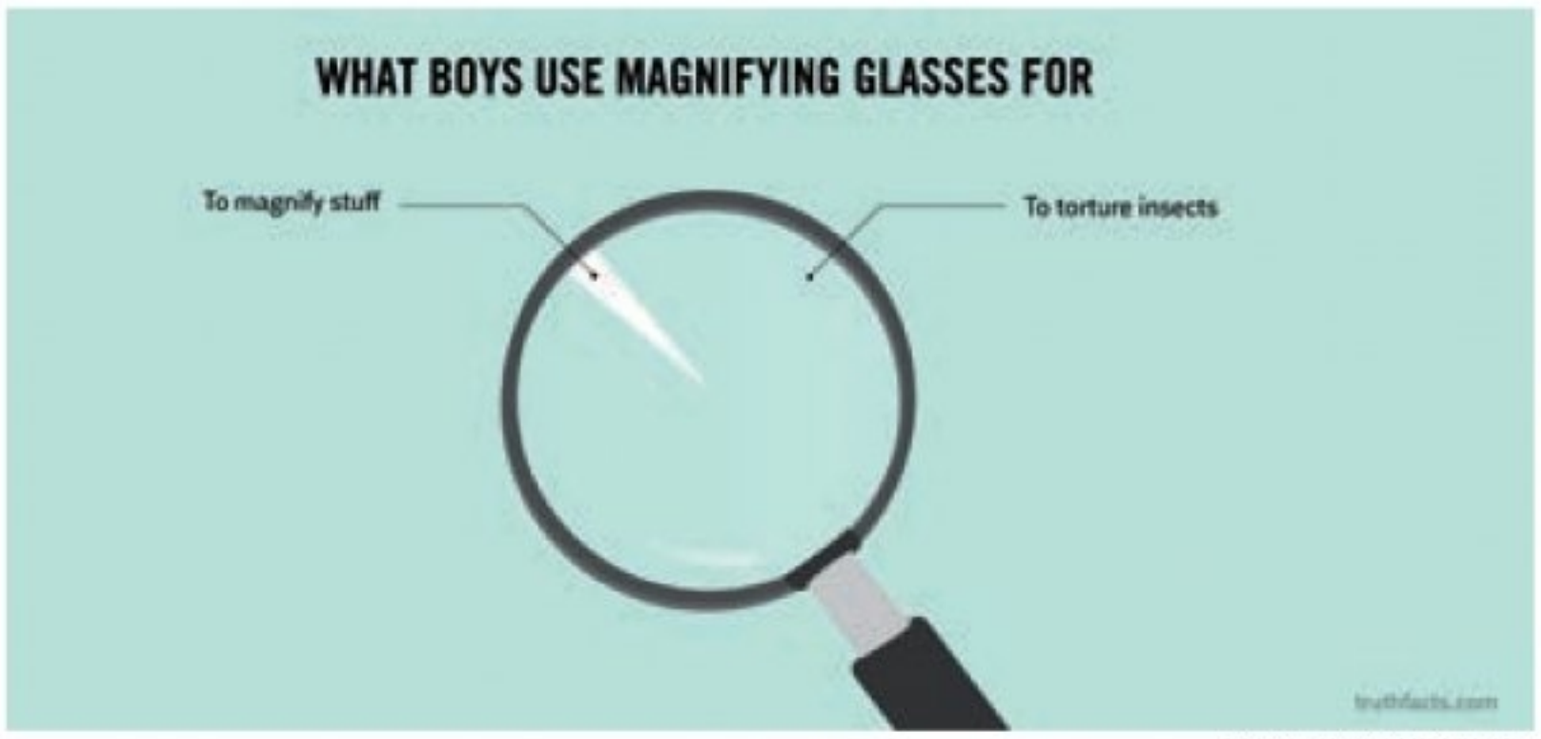

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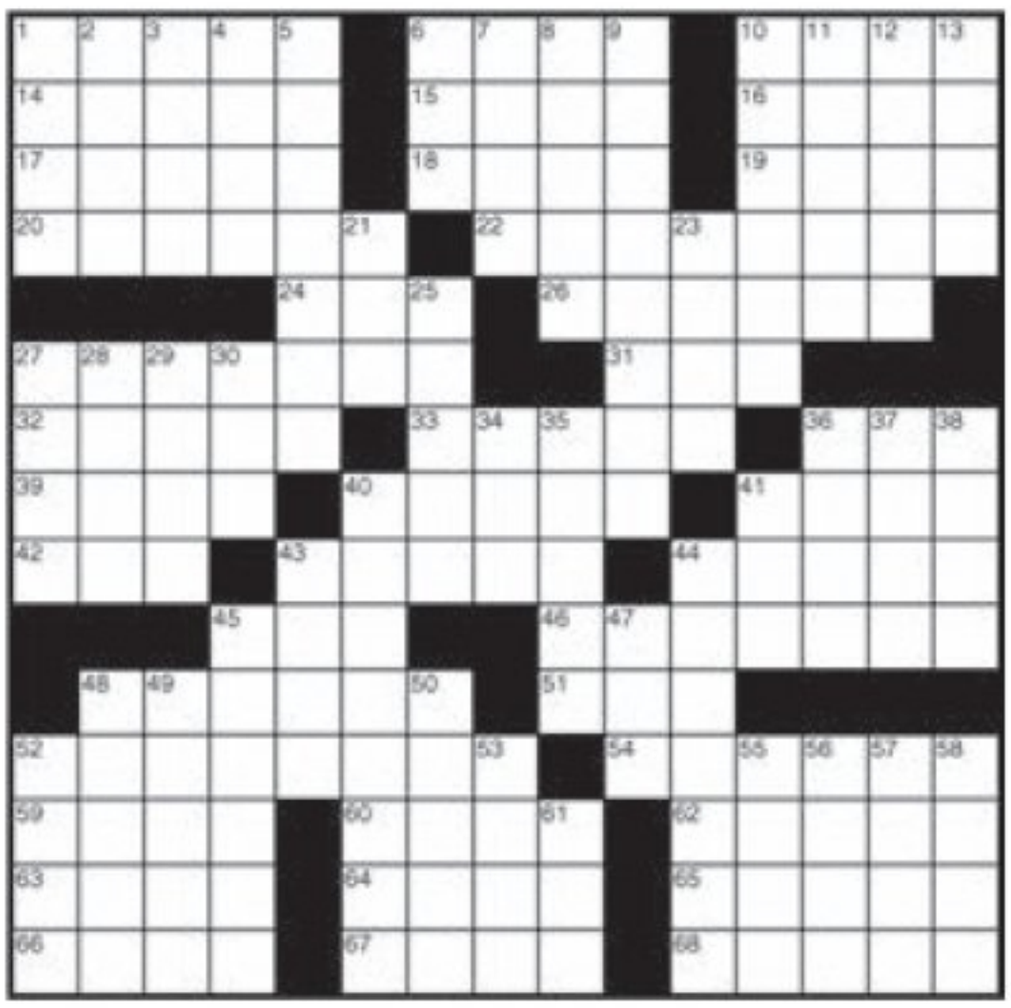

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Aries You will attract attention if you take an enthusiastic approach. Offer help to those in need in order to build a strong support system.

Taurus Someone will try to meddle in your personal affairs. Don't share your problems with peers who could put you in a vulnerable position.

Gemini Stop and think before you take a risk that could lead to an unstable emotional or professional situation. Overdoing it will lead to loss.

Cancer Making home improvements or hosting a function will bring you great satisfaction and joy. The results will lead to advancement.

Leo Travel and communication are favored. Keeping busy will help you get ahead and avoid a spat with someone near and dear to you.

Virgo Don't make unrealistic promises or expect too much from others. Take care of details on your own in order to avoid disappointment.

Libra Waiting for someone else to take the lead will set you back. If you step up and make things happen, you'll be proud of your accomplishments.

Scorpio Pay homage to the people you love the most. Plan something unique that will bring everyone closer together.

Sagittarius Don't offer your time or cash to outsiders or you will be taken advantage of. Your personal responsibilities will keep you busy.

Capricorn In order to get something from others, you have to offer incentives. A personal business proposition can help you raise your income.

Aquarius Gossip or personal secrets will undermine your reputation. Don't express your thoughts openly or share confidences with colleagues.

Pisces Picking up new skills or experiences will boost your earning potential. Finishing what you start will be your ticket to success. EUGENIA LAST

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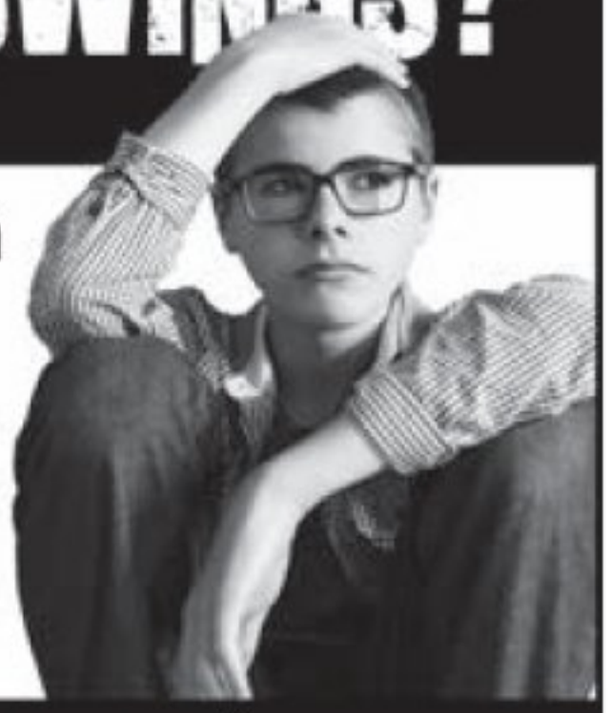

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